THE GREATER JOURNEY: Americans in Paris

was the subject of a great discussion on Wednesday, March 6. In one sense, it’s a kind of travelogue, which invites the reader to “Come, take a trip with me.” David McCullough outlines both the separate and collective journeys of 20 (or more) young Americans who traveled to Paris in search of educational or professional enlightenment. Most were still in their 20’s when they conducted these tours of discovery between 1830 and 1900. France at that time, was a world leader in many fields, and Paris was a magnet and the mecca for aspiring young doctors, writers, and artists of all types.

Many of our readers felt the book was a “comfortable” read, portraying strong cultural differences and a startling exchange of ideas in contrasting historical periods. Several readers, however, felt that it presented a confusing pot-pourri of names, quotes from personal diaries, and “jumped around too much”.

A recurrent theme, was the sensory experience of living in Paris, that for many such travelers “brings one’s own sense of beauty back to life.” Also impressive, was the fact that many of these cultural pioneers brought back their impressions, knowledge and skills, which they later shared in mentoring relationships with other doctors, writers and artists in this country.

I found it interesting to ponder McCullough’s stories of a GREATER JOURNEY, not only as the apparent physical journey from America to Paris, but more im-
portantly, as a series of iconic, personal journeys of identity, self-definition and maturation for young seekers at a crucial tipping point in their life.

For our next meeting on Wednesday, May 1 at Caniglia’s Venice Inn, (11:30 a.m.), we will discuss TWO best-sellers from the popular and prolific author Malcolm Gladwell: **THE TIPPING POINT**: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference, and **OUTLIERS**: The Story of Success.

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